



February 25, 2010

Good morning Senator Colapietro, Representative Shapiro, and members of the General Law Committee. My name is Vicky Graham, and I am President-Elect of the Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association (CATA). On behalf of the CATA, I would like to thank you for your attention to the issue of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in health clubs in Connecticut. The CATA supports SB 186, "An Act Concerning Automatic External Defibrillators in Health Clubs."

Because of the role of licensed athletic trainers in providing medical care for athletes and other patients, the CATA is acutely aware of the incidence of sudden cardiac arrest in physically active, apparently healthy people, particularly during exercise. According to the American Heart Association, health clubs are one of the top ten locations of sudden cardiac arrest in the United States. It is important to understand that sudden cardiac arrest is not the same thing as a heart attack. It can strike anyone, at any time. It results from an electrical disturbance in the heart that causes the heart to go into an abnormal rhythm and cease to function. This can occur to infants, children, teenagers, college students, and adults of all ages and physical conditions.

The grim statistics include the fact that approximately only 5% of sudden cardiac arrest victims survive. Brain damage and death can occur within 4 to 6 minutes of collapse, and for every minute defibrillation is delayed, the survival rate drops by 7-10%. Most people do not receive defibrillation within the 3 to 5 minute window of time for optimal survival. Without early defibrillation, the survival rate will not improve. It is unrealistic to expect that an ambulance or other emergency crew will be able to provide defibrillation within 5 minutes of collapse, so the necessity of automated external defibrillators on the premises of high risk locations is clear.

The state of Connecticut has recognized this fact, as evidenced by legislation passed last year that now requires AEDs in schools, another top ten location of sudden cardiac arrest. The state last year also modified Good Samaritan Law language related to AEDs, to provide Good Samaritan protections for the entity providing the device. This issue has previously been an impediment to requiring AEDs in health clubs, and now no longer exists. I am proud to point out that the CATA and American Heart Association partnered to advocate for both of these bills, and both are now the law in Connecticut.

AEDs generally cost between \$1000-2500. Training to use the devices is not complicated, and can be provided by either the American Heart Association or American Red Cross for a minimal fee. In light of the fact that health clubs are high-risk locations for sudden cardiac arrest, it does not seem unreasonable at all to require these facilities, which are for-profit businesses, to have one of these life-saving emergency devices on the premises. Health club owners might actually find that their insurance



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premiums are reduced when they do have an AED on the premises. The initial cost of an AED can be easily absorbed by even small businesses, by something as simple as raising monthly membership fees by \$5 per patron, as one example. AEDs are becoming increasingly more commonplace, and many in the public assume one will be available when they are in certain types of facilities. Health clubs certainly fall into this category.

On behalf of the Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association, I would like to thank the General Law Committee for raising SB 186, "An Act Concerning Automatic External Defibrillators in Health Clubs," and urge you each to support this bill. Thank you.